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# Moral education in early childhood

A booklet on moral vision

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The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the process and outcome of creating a guidance booklet on moral education for a kindergarten.

There are many components that affect how humans behave and treat each other, and of these morality is not the least significant, the basis of which is laid in childhood. Life in contemporary Finland is and is becoming more cosmopolitan and multicultural than ever, propelling individuals, communities, and institutions to rethink their core values and worldviews.

It was perceived that during a transitional time like this, there exists an especial need for moral education in childhood in order to safeguard the harmonious mingling of people from increasingly diverse cultural, social, religious, and traditional backgrounds.

The booklet this thesis introduces and analyzes has been created in close cooperation and consultation with the working life partner and with their whole-hearted and constructive support.

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Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena on analysoida päiväkodille tehdyn moraali-kasvatuskirjasen tekoprosessia ja lopputulosta.

On monia tekijöitä, jotka vaikuttavat siihen kuinka ihmiset käyttäytyvät ja kohtelevat toisiaan, joista moraali on yksi merkittävimmistä. Sen pohja luodaan lapsuudessa. Elämä nykysuomessa on kansainvälisempää kuin koskaan kannustaen yksilöitä, yhteisöjä ja instituutioita pohtimaan niille keskeisiä arvoja ja maailmankuvaa.

Havaittiin, että tällaisena aikana on korostunut tarve lapsuuden moraalikasvatukselle, jotta yhä moninaisemmista kulttuurisista, sosiaalisista, uskonnollisista ja pe-

rinteisistä taustoista tulevien ihmisten kohtaaminen tapahtuisi sopusointuisesti ja turvallisesti.

Se kirjanen, jota tässä opinnäytetyössä analysoidaan on tuotettu läheisessä yhteistyössä työelämäkumppanin kanssa ja heidän täydellä tuellansa.

Keywords

Morality, education, children, vision

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“Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom”

~ Bahá'u'lláh

# **1 Introduction**

## **1.1 Introduction of the thesis**

This thesis seeks to develop the area of moral education of children in the field of early childhood education. To further this aim, a booklet aimed at helping professionals in becoming more conscious of and more determined to carry out moral education was created in cooperation with a kindergarten in Jyväskylä.

During the third practical placement related to the Degree Programme in Social Services, taking place in two separate kindergartens, it was noted that this aspect of child education receives very little to no attention in the daily activities of a kindergarten.

This observation was corroborated by numerous deliberations with professionals of the field currently working in various parts of the country, making the decision on the topic of this thesis quite easy and straightforward.

As to why the development of children's moral education in particular should receive an added emphasis and impetus at this very moment, it is argued, is due to a number of issues that will be discussed under the remaining two sub-headings of this introduction.

After the introduction, the thesis moves onto describing the working field of early childhood education and introduces the kindergarten that was willing to act as a working life partner for this project.

Therefrom we shall move on to establish a theoretical framework for children's learning and how consequently morality can be taught to and discussed with them. This part will also carefully examine the national and international documents that deal with early childhood education and their moral precedents.

The fourth part will describe the process of creating the above-mentioned booklet. It will explain why a booklet was seen as best corresponding to the task of developing moral education, what led to the emergence of this idea in the first place, how the booklet was actually done with the working life partner, and did it eventually manage to advance the goal for which it was created.

The thesis then concludes with a recapitulation of the work and conclusions drawn from its various aspects. Lastly, we shall discuss the professional implications this thesis has on the developmental needs of the field of early childhood education.

## 1.2 The socioeconomical situation of Finland

Finland is becoming more international, multicultural, and diverse as we speak and this trend will in all probability continue well into the future, if the country wishes to preserve and consolidate its status as a welfare state and treat its citizens accordingly. Why this development will most likely perpetuate itself is because of a few interconnected reasons within the Finnish society.

The birthrate of Finland is and has been steadily decreasing for several years, especially among the less educated population (Ala-Mettälä 2014). This means that in the future, even as now, there will not be enough people to work for and support the structure of the welfare state and those who have already retired from working life.

This threshold was crossed, for the first time in Finland's history, a few years ago, initiating a range of discussions and political processes on the details of pension and pensioners. An attempt towards a solution by raising the earliest age at which one can retire has been described as defective by a recent study (Blencowe 2014).

At the same time, the generation of youth born in the mid to late 80s seems to suffer from unprecedented amounts of mental health problems (Punkka 2013). This further dims the prospects for the future as many of these youth and young adults will be admitted permanent disability pension, cutting short their careers of contributing to the society.

In 2011, out of the total of 13251 people under the age of 30 who were granted pension, the vast majority of 10147 of them were done so because of mental health and behavioral problems. In 2000, the number of people in the same age group and category was 6296. That is a monstrous increase of slightly more than 60% in a decade (Orispää, Rissanen, Pippuri & Tebest 2013).

There are at least two ways to alleviate this situation of insufficient work force: by increasing the earliest age at which a citizen can retire, which is already taking place, and by taking work force in from outside the country. Both seem to be necessary, and an increasing influx of people from various backgrounds, cultures, traditions, and religions is bound to make individuals, communities, and institutions rethink their core values and grapple this situation.

It might not be too far-fetched to assume that being a member of the European Union and party to a wide variety of agreements that deal with immigration and refugees, this influx will not only continue but gain momentum, and we might be propelling it forward ourselves due to the reasons enumerated above.

Therefore, the better, more systematic, and all-embracing the standard of moral education the children of this and forthcoming generations receive, the more benign, tolerant, and friendly will be the treatment received by those who will arrive here, the easier it will be for them to become a contributing part of the Finnish society, and the less there will be societal unrest or tensions akin to that.

On the other hand, if we now fail to anticipate this development and take it into account in the education of children, the results may be catastrophic. A host of human societies have collapsed in the past precisely for the reason of refusing to rethink their core values, seeing the deficiencies in their ways, and act accordingly.

Let us take as an example another Nordic society, the Greenland Norse, who ultimately perished due to their inability to cooperate with the neighboring Inuit, abandon some cultural values detrimental to them and adopt other more beneficial ones, and rethink their core values (Diamond 2005:140). Their somber example proves that those values, whether of cultural or moral nature, that were beneficent and called for in the past may turn out to be exactly the opposite in the future.

### 1.3 The guidelines for Finnish early childhood education

In addition to compelling demographical reasons, a vision for the moral education of children is called for by another factor, namely, its complete absence in the national documents that guide Finnish early childhood education. None of them use the word "moral" or any of its derivatives even once.



These three main documents are: "Esiopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet" by the Finnish National Board of Education; "Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman perusteet" by Stakes in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Finnish National Board of Education, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities and other expert contributors; and "Valtioneuvoston periaatepäättös varhaiskasvatuksen valtakunnallisista linjauksista" by the Finnish Government, which serves as a basis and foundation for the former two and bases its own guidelines on the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The only semblance of a moral vision in any national document on the subject is to be found in the Finnish law, "Laki lasten päivähoidosta", that stipulates the necessary aspects and details of the arranging and administration of early childhood education in Finland. The content of all these documents will be examined more carefully in the third part of this thesis as mentioned in the introduction.

This practically utter absence of a moral vision in the documents describing early childhood education and its purpose is strange, since they claim to be based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which on its part is explicit in its statement of a moral purpose and vision for a human child. In fact, as we shall later see, the considerations for a moral vision are interspersed throughout that and other international documents.

It could be theorized that this absence of a moral stance is due to the country's past. After the Second World War, Finland had a very clear and well-defined image of a good child and his identity as a human being. Unfortunately, this image and identity was still influenced by Nazi eugenics and the concept of the Aryan master race, especially in schools (Helén & Jauho 2003:75).

Later when Finland's affiliation with the Soviet Union increased, it might have been a pursued strategy to go to the other extreme of complete value neutrality not only in the field of early childhood and elementary education but in other areas as well that could potentially be the subject of scrutiny and interpretation by a neighboring superpower.

Be as it may, today this neutrality is fully represented in the national guiding documents of early childhood education and in itself consists a compelling reason to highlight the importance of having a moral vision for the education of children.

We shall next take a closer look at the environment and situation of the working field and present the working life partner of this final work.

## **2 The working field of early childhood education**

### **2.1 National trends & the capital area**

Except for one major exception within the capital city area, the working field seems to be more or less similar in its dynamics throughout the country. Therefore we shall first look at those qualities that are common or shared by the majority of the kindergartens everywhere in Finland and then briefly describe the situation of the capital city area in more detail.

The overwhelming majority of kindergarten teachers are women. During the author's practical placement, he was the only man working in that kindergarten, and one of the total of only five men that he saw in four different kindergartens altogether. The trend is uniform all over the country with the occasional individual exception.

This homogeneity is a challenge since in single-parent families, that consist 20,5% of all families in Finland, the primary custody of the children belongs to the mother approximately nine times out of ten (Yhden Vanhemman Perheiden Liitto 2014). Thus, small boys in these families are deprived a male role model largely both at home and at the kindergarten.

In those kindergartens of which the author has personal experience the group sizes were constantly over the legal limits. This appears to be a problem elsewhere in the country as well (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2002:14) and has propelled the forming of a task force to revise the current law concerning early childhood education. However, the Finnish government might not provide funding for the legislation and implementation of the law (Oikarinen 2014).

Additionally, the field suffers from high turnover rates of both children and professionals. This destabilizing situation can lead to behavioral problems among some children (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2002:14) and hampers the educational impact a

teacher can have as an intimate relationship with the worker, the parents, and the children must be formed more than once.

Yet another concern is the educational partnership and cooperation between parents and kindergarten personnel (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2002:14). Both personal experience and experiences heard from professionals are commensurate with the statement that parents' interest in the daily activities of the children at the kindergarten, spanning in some cases 8 hours or more, is mostly restricted to eating and sleeping, not what they learned, what did they do, and how did they behave.

Scaling down from national level to the capital region, encompassing within it the cities of Espoo, Helsinki, and Vantaa, the professional environment there suffers from one additional calamity; in addition to the same challenges kindergartens everywhere else in the country are grappling with, these municipalities struggle with an insufficient amount of qualified professional workers.

Last year, 15% of all those working in kindergartens within Helsinki were unqualified or working on a short-term contract (Jokiniemi 2013). The situation is more or less similar in the neighboring municipalities of Espoo and Vantaa. What is more, a total of 300 kindergarten teachers will retire within the next ten years, which is 25% of all the kindergarten teachers currently working in Helsinki (Järvinen 2011).

This prospect seemed so ominous that it led to the then vice-mayor of Helsinki and current Minister of Social Affairs and Health Laura Rätty to call for an increase in the admitted amount of university level students for the field in the capital city region.

All of these factors create a significant obstacle for the carrying out of early childhood education that should "advance the holistic well-being of children" (Stakes 2005:15) and for the preservation of a healthy, peaceful environment conducive to development and learning that should be aimed at (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2002:14). This especially true of the capital city area.

Overall, the work is hectic, involves a lot of multitasking, creativity, and pedagogical skills, brings with it a huge responsibility of the welfare of dozens of children, the salary averages well below 3000€ a month, and the sizes of groups often exceed the limits set by the law because of practical necessity, reducing the work occasionally, or even

daily, from an educational process to chaos control. Hence, managing the work and carrying it out requires iron professionalism from those engaged in the field.

## 2.2 Introducing the working life partner

The working life partner for this final work is kindergarten "Tellus-toddlers" situated in Jyväskylä. The kindergarten operates privately but its services are outsourced by the municipality of Jyväskylä, which seems increasingly to be the *modus operandi* of Finnish municipalities in various areas of their social and, in particular, health care services.

Contrary to many municipal kindergartens, the space for their daily activities inside is quite small, as is the number of children in their daycare, being currently 12. This also means that many of the burdens and handicaps that affect kindergartens in the public sector and were already discussed are absent in their working environment, making a fruitful and full cooperation possible resource and time-wise.

Operated by Mrs. Tuula and Mr. Tapio Nyman in a contiguous space to their house, the kindergarten focuses on especially four areas in its educational curriculum: the teaching of the English language through literature and various mundane activities and sessions; the development of children's minds, creativity, morality, and humour by singing, telling stories, and practicing and performing presentations; the encouragement of an inquisitive attitude natural to the child by frequent visits to the nearby surroundings in the spirit of camping, exercising, playing, and building; and the education of world citizenship as an identity and point of view that affect our everyday choices and attitudes.

It may then come as no wonder that they were readily cooperative and enthusiastic upon being presented the possibility of developing a booklet on moral vision, the topic being highly relevant to their work as can be seen from the areas they have chosen to be the focus of their activities and education. It was also felt that, boasting close to two decades of uninterrupted work in the field, their expertise, knowledge, and insight would add greatly to the content and making of the booklet.

Both Tuula and Tapio are personal acquaintances, which is why approaching them with the proposal to work together on the booklet was natural. The possible problems with objectivity, efficiency, and rigorousness that could arise from this and influence the

quality and scientific credibility of the booklet and this thesis will be discussed in the fourth part of this work.

Those interested in contacting them or wishing to further acquaint themselves with the work they are doing are encouraged to visit their website at <<http://www.tellus-taaperot.com/>>.

### **3 Teaching morality to children**

#### **3.1 How children learn: establishing a theoretical framework**

In defining a theoretical foundation for learning and especially how children learn, a range of theories are taken into account in an attempt to form as holistic a framework as possible within the confines of this thesis. As we will see, there are many ways in which moral behavior and thinking can be conveyed to and fostered in children.

Those theories that focus on the nature of learning behavioral patterns without much involvement of cognition and are therefore analogous also to the training of animals will be presented first. Thence we shall continue to examine the theories that take increasingly into account the human cognition, social life, and culture and argue for their abiding role in the learning of children.

Most of us are familiar with Ivan Pavlov and his discovery of the principle of "classical conditioning", which means that a formerly neutral stimulus acquires the effect of producing the same response in a subject as the original stimulus (Santrock 2008:26).

Thus the dogs Pavlov was experimenting with started to drool whenever he rang a bell, as the ringing of the bell had been associated with situations in which the dogs fed and had over time acquired the ability to produce the same response as the food originally.

Another well-known example of classical conditioning appears in Stanley Kubrick's film "A Clockwork Orange" in which the protagonist is forcefully subjected to a conditioning treatment that ultimately causes him to feel physically nauseous whenever hearing Beethoven's music, which he had hitherto loved.

For the purposes of moral education, however, classical conditioning does not seem to have much to offer; the behavior it enforces is largely involuntary, unconscious, and the theory offers limited possibilities for the development of good behavior.

However, another form of conditioning, termed "operant conditioning", was favored by B.F. Skinner, who argued that the consequences of an action have an effect on the probability of its recurrence in the future. Therefore, an action that receives a punishment is less likely to occur in the future whereas an action that is rewarded will be more likely to reoccur (Santrock 2008:26).

Skinner also held that this dynamic applies not only between humans but between the environment and the humans living in it, the environment having a considerable effect on what kind of behavior we manifest, and proposed that changes in the environment would also produce changes in people (Santrock 2008:26).

The virtue of Skinner's theory, essentially consisting of the concept of reward and punishment, becomes apparent if you have ever trained a dog or another house pet. They need to be rewarded for the behavior that is desirable and punished for the kind of behavior that is not, otherwise they will not learn since there is no other way of communicating rules to them. Same applies to children; they cannot and do not intrinsically know what is right and wrong, what is allowed and what is not, before they learn to communicate through spoken language.

Therefore, operant conditioning offers and acts as a viable method for moral education and is, one could say, a very intuitive approach. If a child's behavior is not satisfactory, an educator sees to it that there will be consequences for that action, making the child understand that this is not desirable or indeed right. Should good behavior manifest itself, this action is rewarded, further encouraging the re-emergence of that behavior or action in the future.

As a principle, operant conditioning is also highly flexible; the carrot and the stick are highly adjustable depending on the current exigencies such as the age of the child and his temperament, and the nature of good or bad behavior. It is in fact so flexible and universal that societies are based upon it. The existence of an independent justice system forces the wicked to restrain their natures and when they do not, a punishment aims at non-repetition of that misdemeanor and simultaneously serves as an example

and as a warning to his fellow citizens. This leads us to the social and cognitive aspects of learning and moral education.

What is referred to as "Observant learning" is a concept of Albert Bandura, the crux of whose theory postulates that humans learn behavior, thoughts, and feelings through cognitive observation of other people and imitating or modeling their behavior. He proposed that an individual's operations in the world are highly dynamic; his cognition affects the environment and vice versa, the environment affects his behavior and vice versa, and behavior affects his cognition and vice versa (Santrock 2008: 27).

One who has spent time with children has no reason to doubt Bandura's assertions. Children acquire a large part of their social repertoire by observing and mimicking adults and other children. Language is among the foremost in this repertoire; without a university education or knowledge of anything related to any existing language, a child makes observations, mimicks sounds and syllables, combines what he has learned, constantly revises his understanding based on observations and impulses around him, and at some point he can speak. In fact, he can do this with more than one language simultaneously.

The same applies to behavior, and this is quintessential for moral education. For if an educator does not practice what he preaches, the effect of what he says is almost brought to naught, and the child cannot learn moral behavior from him or treat him as an example. Surely all of us can reminisce an event in which a person we know said something that did not conform to his deeds, or exhorted others to do something that he had not done himself. It is not too difficult for us to discern between those people who stand behind what they say through their actions and those who pay a mere lip service to their ideals.

Children are no different, and they are much more straightforward in calling out a discrepancy in the educator's actions, be that educator a parent or a professional. Jean Piaget observed that children actively connect, organize, and adapt knowledge and information as they become exposed to it, separating more important ideas from the less important ones in their attempt to make sense of the world (Santrock 2008:23).

So even though children observe and mimic, they are also highly active protagonists in their own learning and behavior-forming instead of being witless containers that only

receive information without processing it. It could be said that this is very essentially human; the capability to form new understanding that was not there before based on previous observations, along with the ability to discard or revise information that was not useful or did not correspond to reality.

The Russian Lev Vygotsky expressed similar views to those of Piaget's, however, he additionally strongly emphasized the sociocultural aspects of learning. Vygotsky believed that children's social interaction, especially with peers or adults more skilled or advanced than themselves, is indispensable to their cognitive development. This concept is referred to as the "zone of proximal development". He also placed great importance to close association with technology, inventions, and cultural achievements as a means of advancing the child's cognitive development (Santrock 2008:25).

With moral education in mind, Vygotsky's views add yet one more crucial aspect: children can, and indeed we say that they should, exhibit leadership which other children can benefit from, be it in the form of skills, morals, behavior, understanding, emotions, and so forth, emphasizing the benefits of children mingling together and learning from each other.

As to children's disposition towards morality in the form of taught principles such as honesty and friendliness, Piaget argued that from two years old onwards, the child starts to use mental representations of the world and becomes active in symbolic thinking that goes beyond immediate cause and effect relationships between sensory information and physical action (Santrock 2008:185). In fact, this might start even earlier than Piaget thought as we now know that he underestimated the cognitive capabilities of infants (Santrock 2008:25).

Based on these examinations into the learning of children, we can enunciate a twofold assertion: children are capable of learning moral behavior through observation, conditioning, cognitive reasoning, and social mingling, and children are capable of moral comprehension, combination, rationalization, refinement, and application. They are both recipients and active protagonists of their own learning.

Such being the case, the methods that can be employed to achieve the purpose of moral education are manifold. Storytelling is a method employed and greatly encouraged in the development of language (Stakes 2005: 19) but can also be effectively



used to convey morals, as many of us have probably experience of. Many children's stories have some kind of a lesson.

Moreover, a moral principle or behavior can act as a central part of a game played with children, artistic sessions can be devoted to moral education in the form of, for instance, performing a play with a moral lesson to give, and the daily life of a kindergarten is certain to offer more than a handful of opportunities to foster and teach morality, to mention but a few. In reality, there are innumerable methods to choose from, and it will largely be the strengths and possibilities of the educator and the kindergarten that determine how morality is to be taught exactly.

So far we have extensively talked about children's ability to learn, but it must be said that children are not only capable of first learning moral behavior and then repeating it, they are capable of spontaneously initiating it, which is essentially what morality is about: a decision to do that which is right and carry it out. This is no different to a child creatively and imaginatively initiating any other form of behavior based on the understanding he has. Why would it be? Thus, children have a fledgling moral identity. A personal example is given next to illustrate this point.

During the third practical placement that was briefly mentioned at the outset of this thesis, a dilemma presented itself at the kindergarten. Some children had slightly bruised themselves by climbing recklessly and falling of a tree. This generated a widespread desire to establish a set of rules for the climbing and utilizing the trees and other structures in the playground, some as rigid as "a child cannot climb higher than the third branch of the tree".

The author favored another idea, for which grounds can be found in the theories presented above. A set of rules of this stringency forms a mechanistic list that does not teach anything to the children; it yields inordinately particular information which is useless and inapplicable everywhere else. What was proposed instead was to teach the children the concept of carefulness.

A child who grasps the meaning of being careful does not need lists as he can apply this principle to a given situation in the measure that the situation requires. Its application is not confined to the tree on the playground but can be universally applied any-

where and in any situation it is required in, encompassing far more than merely physical activities, as the child will gradually come to realize.

Additionally, through his interactions with the environment, peers, and adults he is bound to revise and indefinitely deepen his comprehension of the principle, including some failures in its application. The same goes for any moral principle. After a child truly comprehends what it means to be, let us say, friendly, he can and will find myriads of ways to manifest it.

### 3.2 What values should children be taught?

#### 3.2.1 National guidelines

Perhaps somewhat paradoxically, were it not for the international agreements concerning the moral rights and education of children, we would not know what moral values the Finnish early childhood education system upholds as the basis for a child's identity.

This is because of the fact that none of the major documents that act as a foundation for Finnish early childhood education defines what is moral and what values should be taught to children as moral, with the exception of one sentence in the Finnish law. This sentence goes as follows, and has been translated into English by the author: "In advancing the development of the child, daycare should support a child's growth into shared responsibility and peace as well as the preservation of the living environment" (Parliament of Finland 1973:2a§).

The other three major documents that have are restated here for the convenience of the reader are "Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman perusteet", "Esiopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet" and "Valtioneuvoston periaatepäättös varhaiskasvatuksen valtakunnallisista linjauksista", the latter establishing the basic principles and precedents of early childhood education that have been incorporated into the former two documents.

These documents state that the purpose of early childhood education is to ensure and advance the healthy growth, learning, and development of a child (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2002: 9) and that it should aim at a holistic well-being of the child through the combination of care, education, and teaching (Stakes 2005:15). Preschool

should additionally guide the child's growth towards societal and ethical responsibility as well as the respect for other people and adherence to mutually agreed rules (Finnish National Board of Education 2010:6).

Similar statements are repeated throughout these document and they even admit that traditionally the purpose of education has been to better the society and the world (Stakes 2005:8), however, at no point do they say what moral values should children be taught.

"Esiopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet" comes closest in its description of the ethical orientation that should be part of preschool education, stating that teaching should include the going through values such as tolerance, moderation, justice and fairness, and courage as well as being benign (Finnish National Board of Education 2010: 15). Even though it could be inferred from this that these are values the children should be taught, this is not explicitly mentioned. The only explicitly mentioned goal of character education is "the avoidance of violence" (Finnish National Board of Education 2010: 16)

In fact, none of these documents, amounting to a well over 100 pages in total, use the word "moral" or any of its derivatives even once. They highlight the holistic well-being and development of the child from various aspects and in many ways throughout all of them, encourage on a general level the education towards healthy relationships and uphold the concept of character education, but they never mention what moral values should be taught in order to achieve these goals.

The international agreements, to the contrary, that also act as the basis for the aforementioned Finnish documents by no means leave these values to be a subject of speculation.

### 3.2.2 International guidelines

The major international documents that guide the education of children are those adopted by the United Nations and agreed upon by its member states, namely, the Convention of the Rights of the Child, The Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Charter of United Nations.

We shall next look into the contents of these documents and what they say about moral values that education should seek to impart.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, so far the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history, states in its 29<sup>th</sup> article:

States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to...the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations...the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin [emphasis added] (United Nations General Assembly 1989).

Already in here we have numerous moral imperatives that the parties to this treaty, encompassing all but a few countries in the world, agree to uphold and foster in children.

"The principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations" referred to in the previous quotation that we should develop children to have respect for are the maintaining of international peace and security, the development of friendly relations among nations, the strengthening of universal peace, and the achievement of international cooperation in solving problems of economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character (United Nations Conference on International Organization 1945).

The very first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights encourages us, having been endowed with conscience and reason, in its first article to "act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood" (United Nations General Assembly 1948).

And finally, the Declaration of the Rights of the Child pronounces in its tenth article:

The child shall be protected from practices which may foster racial, religious and any other form of discrimination. He shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood, and in full consciousness that his energy and talents should be devoted to the service of his fellow men (United Nations General Assembly 1959).

When compared to the Finnish guidelines, the international documents stand out in glaring contrast to them with respect to moral considerations. In addition, they just do not list values that should be taught, they offer a vision of a moral human being. The

fact that all these aspects are absent in the Finnish documents means that, for some reason, a decision has been made to fashion them to be almost entirely value-neutral.

We can only guess what the reasons for this are, but this situation nevertheless begs us to ask a question: has the glorification of the individual's right to self-determination gone so far since the time of the writing of these international treaties that a proper moral vision for his life cannot be determined, even though it be the whole of humanity that stands, at least on paper, behind the assertion of that vision?

Be as it may, we have a vision for the moral education of a child. That vision entails that the child must be protected from practices and influences that may foster discrimination between people, for any reason; that he should have understanding and tolerance towards other and think of them as his friends and brethren; that this friendship and brotherhood should extend to every other person on the globe regardless of denomination, national, or ethnic boundaries; that he should strive in his life for the establishment and promotion of universal peace; and that he should become a contributing, responsible member of society and should realize that his abilities should be directed towards the service of his fellow human beings.

This is what humanity has chosen to be moral, these are the values we should teach to children. This decision is irrespective of the actual nature of morality, believed by some to have an intrinsic value and a transcendental metaphysical existence removed from the control of humans, and regarded by others to be a social construct of gradually developing and emerging nature ultimately determined by humans themselves.

The international guidelines also bring up another issue that is closely related to morality and moral identity: internationalism as a part of our identity, and disregard of boundaries such as nationality, ethnicity, religious affiliation and the like for the manifestation of friendship and brotherhood.

Indeed, could a moral identity not rooted in empathy towards all the inhabitants on the planet be considered moral in the first place? It does not seem moral to desire peace for your own country or continent but not for the entire world, or to be tolerant towards certain people but fail to exhibit it towards others, as these and similar dispositions impose arbitrary limitations to the application of moral principles.

We have now seen that children are capable of understanding morality, initiating moral behavior, and have a nascent moral identity. It has also become evident that there are mutually agreed and proclaimed values that should form the basis of this identity and should be educated in early childhood. We shall now take a closer look at the booklet of moral education that was the result of this analysis and the process of creating it.

## **4 A booklet on moral education**

### **4.1 Acquiring a vision for the booklet**

The idea of creating a moral guidance booklet for a kindergarten was the outcome of a number of factors. Moral education has always been a subject highly interesting and compelling to the author. It is the sophistication of our thoughts of good and evil, right and wrong, or the lack thereof, ultimately determine what we do with our lives and how.

A major impetus for the creation of the said booklet was more specifically lent by two simultaneous processes: conducting the third practical placement connected with the Degree Programme in Social Services in a kindergarten and the perusal of the major documents that constitute the foundation of Finnish early childhood education.

During the said third practice placement, taking place in a kindergarten, it was noted that the activities therein are not designedly aimed at fostering the development of a moral character in the children, and that parents seem to have very little interest in what their offspring are engaged in during the day apart from eating, sleeping, and playing.

This observation corresponded with similar ones made during visits to other kindergartens and extensive deliberations on the subject with several professional acquaintances currently working in the field in other parts of the country.

These experiences coincided with voluntarily delving into the national documents that create the framework for early childhood education in Finland. Their perusal was accompanied by a comparative mindset that sought to identify similarities and dissimilarities between them and the international agreements and conventions, ratified by Finland, that serve as their basis.

As a result, it was perceived that the national documents seem to lack a holistic vision for the moral education of children, and indeed fail to state what principles, virtues, and attributes should be taught to children as moral, as we saw in the previous part of this thesis.

Thus, through the combination of all these observations, discoveries, and ideas, it was decided that a booklet be made that would contain gleanings of those parts of the international documents that describe a vision for the moral upbringing of a child. This idea was then offered to the working life partner as such, sparking a collaboration for its creation.

Why a booklet was chosen as the form corresponding best to the needs of moral education in early childhood and the developmental task this thesis seeks to fulfil was because of a few perceived advantages.

Among the first was that being of general character and presenting the essential guidelines that exist on moral education, it could be utilized in basically any kindergarten. The same is not true of, for instance, a method of teaching or a particular session that would aim to foster morality, owing to the various exigencies present in kindergartens. General guidelines and principles, on the other hand, can be applied anywhere in conformity with the local situation.

Another advantage was that in addition to educators who could gain knowledge, insights, and inspiration from such a booklet and to whom it is primarily targeted at, it could also be offered to the parents by the kindergarten, who, according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, have the primary responsibility of educating and raising up their child. This could potentially unify and focus the educational efforts of the parents and the professional workers and enhance their cooperation, which is greatly called for in the national documents of early childhood education (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2002:5, 7, 9, 17).

Lastly, it was felt that a booklet could spread knowledge efficiently and facilitate personal reflection in like manner. The international documents, as well as the Finnish ones, that have been cited in this thesis amount in their entirety to a massive amount of pages and reading. Given that many educators are probably not aware of the moral contents of the international documents, and as there is practically none in the Finnish

ones, a brief booklet would be easy to approach, handy, and yet profoundly impactful at best.

#### 4.2 Collaboration with the working life partner

After the kindergarten "Tellus-toddlers" had accepted the idea, work on initial draft on the booklet was begun. It was agreed that, owing to the day-to-day hurry of working in a kindergarten, the author would complete the draft by himself and it would then be modified, adjusted, and molded jointly to attain a final form. The version of the booklet that appears as an appendix to this thesis is in its final form content-wise but missing a cover page and an appealing layout.

This process was brief and efficient as the first draft already satisfied to a great extent the Tellus-toddlers' needs and expectations. In addition to email exchange on the topics and way of presentation in the booklet, a final one-hour meeting was conducted through a video conference call to give it its final form.

During this meeting, wordings of several parts of the booklet were revised and changed, the questions at the end of the booklet were modified with some omitted and some added, several paragraphs were added to the text with others modified, and the flow of the entire booklet was revised and unified to form as holistic an entity as possible.

It can be said that cooperation with the kindergarten was highly inspiring, fluid, and efficient. However, there are considerations that need to be taken into account and that were hinted at when the kindergarten was presented in part two.

These considerations relate to a few psychological tendencies humans naturally have that can greatly hamper the efficiency and objectivity of working in groups. The first one is a phenomenon called "groupthink" by its coiner Irving Janis, which postulates that certain group pressures lead to a deterioration of "mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment" (Janis 1972: 9). The phenomenon can cause groups to ignore alternatives based on a number of reasons, including similarity in background.

A well-known case of this phenomenon the invasion of the Bay of Pigs that turned out to be a fiasco for the United States, forcing the freshly inaugurated president John F.



Kennedy to adopt more robust decision making policies for the future (Diamond 2005:412).

As the author was personally acquainted with the Tellus-toddlers' workers and since the values of their kindergarten were already very close to the ones that are supported in the booklet, albeit them being directly taken from an independent, international document, this makes it possible that our cooperation has indeed suffered from groupthink and has affected the credibility of the booklet and the process of its creation.

The problem is that if that has been the case, we would not notice it ourselves, otherwise it would have been avoided. So far hindsight has not offered an analysis that would prove definitely that there was or was not groupthink but it still must be taken into account that its existence and influence is a very real possibility.

Another similar type of hampering factor is referred to as the "confirmation bias". It means that people are more ready to accept and process information that corresponds to their already existing ideas and disregard those that do not, and that they unknowingly search for information that confirms their preconceived hypotheses instead of searching for and accepting the truth (Taleb 2010:58).

Again, it might be the case that the experienced efficiency of consultation with the Tellus-toddlers was in fact due to the confirmation bias. The fact that there were nevertheless modifications, additions, and constructive criticism on the draft could be taken as pointing towards at least some form of objective consultation.

However, as with the case of groupthink, it is probable that the truth of the matter will forever remain a mystery due to the absence of an objective third party observer during the process phase. All that can be said is that cooperation was done in good spirit and both parties were happy with the final result.

#### 4.3 Did the booklet attain its goal?

Given that moral education and its development is a phenomenon that is measured in years rather than in months or weeks, it is impossible to state definitely whether the booklet has attained its ultimate goal of helping educators develop their vision of moral education and implement it in the field. If we look at the contents of the booklet itself,

however, we can say that it succeeded in its goal of compiling and condensing that vision into an easily accessible form.

The contents already changed the Tellus-toddlers' way of looking at their webpage more as a source of educational ideas rather than a sign with which to market their enterprise. Already during the final discussion they mentioned how they would like to upload some of the quotations from the statements of the United Nations to their webpage.

The author was also left with the impression that they would be regularly utilizing the booklet themselves, for example, in the personal early childhood education planning sessions that are held with the parents of each children. Additionally, they are free to share it with other professionals they encounter, an idea they initially greeted with enthusiasm.

Time will tell if the booklet serves its purpose. Now that it has been fashioned, it can be effortlessly offered to any kindergarten or individual who espouses interest in the moral education of children, and distributed more generally as a brief summary of the moral vision for the moral education of children to anyone interested in it.

The author would consider it a signal victory if it was but only one person that benefited from the booklet's contents and steeled himself to abide by the standard of moral education inculcated by international agreements presented therein.

## **5 Conclusions**

### **5.1 Review of the work**

To recapitulate, we have now explained and described the initial impetus and motivation behind this thesis. After that, we have examined the assumptions and findings that define its theoretical framework in the field of early childhood, as well as presented the relevant contents of the national and international source materials for moral education to be applied based on that framework.

Finally, we have explained the process of creating the booklet that combines the theory and the values enshrined in the international documents into a tool aimed at helping to foster the moral education of children.

It is now up to those with whom the booklet has been created, as well as the author himself, to ensure that the work that has been put into it and the insights that have been gained while working on it do not remain as mere words on paper but are increasingly translated into living reality. It is hoped that also other workers of the field will at some point peruse the booklet when given the chance and use it to further their educational efforts.

The writing of this thesis has been a great learning experience, to say the least, and the process of initially becoming interested in the idea, finding and perusing material, and actually carrying out the work has taken almost a year altogether. This has served as a thorough confidence boost for the prospect of possibly working in the field of early childhood education in the future.

The thesis could not have been done without the inexhaustible support of several people, none of whom were directly linked to the making of this thesis, and of others whose ideas and influence were crucial and fed the process in its early stages.

## 5.2 Reflections and propositions

Finland's educational system has been praised in abundance. We have topped or been very close to the top in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) charts year after year. Academically and intellectually we seem to be very well off.

However, this thesis has uncovered a grave defect in the guidance of early childhood education in Finland. While it admirably takes into account all other aspects of child development, this guidance utterly neglects moral education as we have seen. This may have and may already have had serious repercussions for the people our country.

James Rest argues that a moral character means, in addition to what we have discussed concerning principles and ideals, to have strong convictions, persistence, and the ability to overcome obstacles and distractions, which life is bound to throw at us. A lack of moral character in Rest's view may lead to lapsing under pressure or fatigue or

becoming distracted or discouraged, leading to immoral behavior (Rest cited in Santrock 2008:394). Could this be one of the reasons for those rising mental health issues that were discussed earlier in this thesis?

Moreover, intellectual achievement does not make anyone a good and amicable person. The human intellect is more of a tool than anything else, while it is the refinement of his character that dictates how this tool is used. Let us take as an example the economic crisis the world was plunged into some years back. While the proximate reason was the collapse of the financial system, the ultimate reason was the greed and selfishness of certain individuals whose actions led to the systems collapse.

Nobody would claim that these people were not intelligent or educated, to the contrary the positions they held were probably a result of these attainments. But as they were guided by the biological incentives of greed and self-preservation, these intellectual gifts were capable of wreaking unprecedented havoc on the economy. The same goes for any biological trait we have, if they remain unrestrained by a sense of cultivated morality.

This does not mean that we should emphasize only the moral education of children, since us adults are the ones who carry that education out. If adults and workers do not strive to behave morally, they will not have an abiding influence in the lives of their children. As we remember from part three of this thesis, children are highly observant and able to make a distinction between what is said and done. If they notice an educator teaching friendliness yet in the very next instance failing to be friendly, does that not give them the message that being friendly is not so important after all since the educator did not care enough to truly exhibit it in his own actions?

The world is fast moving towards greater and greater social complexity and interdependence by a twofold process: the mutual gains that can be harvested by working together and the mutual harms that can be avoided by the same method, and the ultimately unifying influence of apparently divisive developments. This is largely the history of mankind, having coursed from unified units of clans and families to unified entities such as nations and supra-national organizations. 3500 years ago there were 600000 autonomous polities on the planet, today around 200 (Wright 2000:211).

Thus the United Nations was established after the Great Wars to prevent similar atrocities from taking place in the future, the main incentive in the forming of the European Union was to make countries economically so interdependent that war would not make sense anymore, and so on.

Mankind has for its whole duration experienced the dynamic of severe setbacks and advances, ultimately contributing to unification into larger units and complexity of information exchange within it and between it and other systems. This seems to be a kind of a logic of the evolution of complex systems, such as human societies, and applies similarly to organic evolution as well (Laszlo 1996:39; Wright 2000:251).

This means that increasingly diverse people will increasingly mingle as time goes on, requiring from us a shift in identity and the way we think about ourselves, again called for by the statements and agreements of the United Nations. We all identify on various levels of social organization: we have a family, we are born in a particular city, are residents of a certain municipality, live in a certain region of the country and are its citizens.

But why stop there? Our national identity and the similarity and belonging we experience through it does not take anything away from our family, village, neighborhood, town, or region or the way we feel we belong to them. If this is the case, why would a global identity take anything away from our national one?

In the words of Charles Darwin:

As man advances in civilization, and small tribes are united into larger communities, the simplest reason would tell each individual that he ought to extend his social instincts and sympathies to all the members of the same nation, though personally unknown to him. This point being once reached, there is only an artificial barrier to prevent his sympathies extending to the men of all nations and races. (Darwin cited in Wright 2000:iv)

Therefore, in order to develop the field of early childhood education and through that guarantee a more balanced and prosperous future, we should revise our paradigm of early childhood education in three aspects pertaining to moral education.

First, education of moral character should take precedence over the education of intellect. This is not to say that intellect is bad, to the contrary, but we do propose that it is secondary in importance to the moral framework that one day guides its fully grown

use. A person who might not be intellectually the most gifted but whose morality is exemplary is far more beneficial for the society and people around him than the person whose keen intellectual abilities are controlled by the baser qualities of man. This will also ensure that the educational system will give rise to people whose both moral and intellectual achievements are exemplary.

The second proposal is that while moral education in early childhood should be immediately admitted to the national early childhood education curriculum, it should not be confined to children but encompass within its fold professional working in the field and youth going through compulsory education.

An educator cannot not effectively impart moral education, as has been made clear, without being able to manifest morality themselves. Further, there is no reason to stop moral education after childhood, and it could be argued that it is of special importance in early adolescence and youth when individuals go through a lot of emotional, physical, and mental changes.

Lastly, moral education should, in addition to fostering those principles declared by the United Nations, aim at the development of global identity and sympathy also called for by the United Nations. "Think globally, act locally" as the saying goes. Children have no natural tendency to identify with certain geographical boundaries. Why then make them to? Again it must be mentioned that this does not preclude respect and interest in affairs of one's own country but the notion that this respect and interest should not becloud an individual's regard for the well-being of the world and its affairs.

Human history is largely a history of violence, strife, cruelty, and suffering, interspersed with periods and locations of peace and prosperity. Today, however, we possess all the tools, the knowledge, and the legal foundations to change this course for good and reverse it, for the whole world. If the past has served as a warning example, let us make of future what a person of today would, upon witnessing it, sigh for in envy.

Morality plays a pivotal part if we are to make this change a reality, and its foundations are embedded in early childhood, having far-reaching repercussions for the adult life.

Thus this thesis has exhausted its theme and now concludes with the words of Martin Luther King, Jr:

When we look at modern man, we have to face the fact that modern man suffers from a kind of poverty of the spirit, which stands in glaring contrast to his scientific and technological abundance. We've learned to fly the air like birds, we've learned to swim the seas like fish, and yet we haven't learned to walk the Earth as brothers and sisters... (King 1960)

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## **Visio lapsen moraalikasvatukselle**

### **JOHDANTO**

Tämän lyhyen ohjekirjan tarkoituksena on toimia apuvälineenä päiväkodissa työskenteleville ammattilaisille heidän päivittäisissä ponnisteluissaan tasapainoisen, terveen ja kokonaisvaltaisen lastenkasvatuksen toteuttamiseksi yhteistyössä vanhempien kanssa. Sen painopiste on lapsen moraalien ja moraalisuuden toiminnan kautta kehittyvän identiteetin tukeminen ja kasvattaminen päiväkotiympäristössä.

Ohjekirja ei pyri antamaan valmiita vastauksia, vaan selkeyttämään ja fokuoimaan moraalikasvatuksen visiota sekä siihen liittyviä pohdintoja ja toimia päiväkodissa sekä Suomen lain ja kansallisten varhaiskasvatusta koskevien dokumenttien että ennen kaikkea kansainvälisten sopimusten ja säädösten valossa.

## LAPSI MORAALISENA TOIMIJANA

Alle kolmevuotiaan lapsen toimintaa ohjaavat keskimäärin hyvin pitkälti hänelle sisäsyntyinen uteliaisuutensa, viettinsä, aistinsa ja ympäristön ärsykkeet, joskin yksilöllisiä eroja on paljon. Pienen lapsen moraalinen kasvatus perustuukin lähinnä palkkion ja rangaistuksen muodostamaan dynamiikkaan, jonka kautta lapsi oppii mitä saa ja mitä ei saa tehdä, mikä on oikein ja mikä väärin. Myös matkimisella ja aikuisten tekemisten jäljittelemisellä on hyvin merkittävä rooli siinä, mitä lapsi tässä vaiheessa omaksuu toiminta- ja käyttäytymistavoikseen.

Tässä vaiheessa lapsen kyky abstraktiin ajatteluun, käsitteiden sisäistämiseen ja vertauskuvien ymmärtämiseen ja käyttöön, joiden muodostumisessa kielellä ja sen kehitymisellä on suuri merkitys, ovat vasta orastamassa.

Kolmen ikävuoden jälkeen nämä kyvyt alkavat ilmetä voimakkaammin ja vaikuttaa lapsen toimintaan aiempaa selvemmin. Hänen ajatuksensa eivät välttämättä ole enää suoraan sidoksissa aistien kautta saadun tiedon ja fyysisten toimien kanssa ja hän oppii ilmaisemaan ja ymmärtämään asioita kuvainnollisesti. Eron tämän ja aiemman vaiheen välillä huomaa käytännössä esimerkiksi hippaleikissä, jossa aikuinen on susi ja yrittää ottaa kiinni ja syödä lampaita esittäviä lapsia. Jos sutena ollessaan sanoo ”minä syön sinut!”, se innostaa niitä lapsia jotka ymmärtävät että lausahdus ei ole kirjaimellinen vaan vertauskuvallinen ja tarkoittaa hippaleikin asiayhteydessä kiinni saamista ja kannustusta lapsille juosta karkuun, mutta saattaa kauhistuttaa lapsen, jonka mieli ei ole vielä kykeneväinen abstraktiin ja kuvainnolliseen pohdintaan, ymmärtäen lausahduksen täysin kirjaimellisesti.<sup>1</sup>

Myös hänen toimintansa hyväksyminen vanhempien ja ikätoverien puolelta alkaa olla lapselle tässä vaiheessa tärkeämpää. Palkkio ja rangaistus, vaikkakin kasvatuksellisesti merkittäviä, eivät enää määritä yhtä suurta osaa lapsen toiminnan motiiveista; hänelle on entistä tärkeämpää tulla hyväksytyksi, erityisesti vanhempiensa taholta.<sup>1</sup>

Moraalikasvatuksen näkökulmasta tämä vaihe on erittäin oleellinen, sillä abstraktin ajattelun ja kognitiivisen toiminnan lisääntymisen myötä lapselle syntyy kyky oppia sisäistämään ja soveltamaan periaatteita ja hyveitä. Esimerkkinä voidaan antaa lapsi, joka on sisäistänyt mitä varovaisuus tarkoittaa.

Varovaisuuden käsitteen ymmärtänyt lapsi on kykeneväinen arvioimaan omaa osaamistaan ja olemaan leikeissään varovainen riippumatta siitä, minkälaisessa toimintaympäristössä hän kulloinkin on. Tällä tavoin hän myös oppii varovaisuudesta koko ajan lisää, myös silloin kun hän ei ole osannut omia rajojaan arvioida ja on vaikkapa kolhaissut itseään kiipeilypuuhissa, ja kehittyy jatkuvasti sekä toimintansa monipuolisuudessa että ymmärryksensä syvyydessä. Sitä vastoin lapsi, jolle on opetettu mekaaninen lista asioita joita ”saa tehdä” tai ”ei saa tehdä” ei pääse samalla tavoin oppimaan itsestään tai periaatteista ja niiden soveltamisesta.

## VISIO LASTEN MORAALIKASVATUKSELLE

Christopher K. Germerin kirjassa ”Myötätunnon tie” kerrotaan isoisän ja lapsenlapsen välisestä keskustelusta:

Vanha cherokee-intiaani kertoi eräänä iltana lapsenlapselleen ihmisten sisällä tapahtuvasta taistelusta. Hän sanoi: ”Poikani, meidän kaikkien sisällä taistelee kaksi ‘sutta’.” ”Toinen on Paha. Se on kiukku, kateus, mustasukkaisuus, suru, katumus, ahneus, ylimielisyys, itsesääli, syyllisyys, inho, alemmuudentunne, valheet, väärä ylpeys, ylemmyudentunne ja ego.”

”Toinen on Hyvä. Se on ilo, rauha, toivo, tyyneys, nöyryys, lempeys, hyvänsuopuus, empatia, anteliaisuus, totuus, myötätunto ja usko.” Lapsenlapsi ajatteli asiaa hetken ja kysyi sitten isoisältään: ”Kumpi susi voittaa?” Vanha cherokee vastasi yksinkertaisesti: ”Se, jota ruokit.”

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Ehkä hieman yllättäen vastausta kysymykseen ”Mikä on kokonaisvaltainen visio moraalille lastenkasvatukselle?” ei ole löydettävissä Suomen varhaiskasvatuslaista<sup>2</sup>, niistä kansallisista dokumenteista jotka varhaiskasvatusta ohjaavat Suomessa<sup>3</sup> tai Jyväskylän varhaiskasvatussuunnitelmasta.

Edellä mainituista dokumenteista ”Laki lasten päivähoidosta”<sup>2</sup> on ainoa, joka tarjoaa minkäänlaista arvopohjaista visiota siitä, minkälaiseksi ihmislapsen pitäisi kasvaa. Pykälässä 2 a todetaan: ”*Edistäessään lapsen kehitystä päivähoidon tulee tukea lapsen kasvua yhteisvastuuseen ja rauhaan sekä elinympäristön vaalimiseen.*” Sana ”moraali” johdannaisineen ei ilmene yhdessäkään näistä asiakirjoista, ja vaikka ne puhuvat eettisestä orientaatiosta osana lapsen kehitystä ja kasvua, etenkin esikouluikässä, ne eivät ota kantaa siihen, minkälaisia arvoja, hyveitä ja periaatteita lapsi tulisi kasvattaa vaalimaan ja toteuttamaan.

Sen sijaan ne kansainväliset sopimukset ja julistukset, joihin Suomenkin varhaiskasvatus ohjeistuksineen pohjautuu, ovat asian suhteen huomattavasti selkeämmät, yksiselitteisemmät ja kokonaisvaltaisemmat.

Yhdistyneiden Kansakuntien ”Lapsen oikeuksien julistus”<sup>4</sup> toteaa kymmenennessä artiklassaan: *”Lasta tulee suojella sellaisilta toiminnoilta, jotka saattavat kasvattaa hänessä taipumuksia rodulliseen, uskonnolliseen tai muunlaiseen syrjintään. Häntä on kasvatettava ymmärtämykseen, suvaitsevaisuuteen, kansojen välisen ystävyys, rauhan ja yleismaailmallisen veljeyden hengessä sekä täysin tietäen, että hänen tarmonsä ja kykynsä olisi saatettava palvelemaan hänen lähimmäisiään.”*

Kolmekymmentä vuotta myöhemmin laadittu, nykyisin kansainvälisen lain aseman omaava ja muutamaa poikkeusta lukuun ottamatta kaikkien maailman valtioiden ratifioima ”Lapsen oikeuksien sopimus”<sup>5</sup> edellyttää 29:ssä artiklassaan sopimusvaltioilta, että lapsen koulutuksen tulee pyrkiä: *”ihmisoikeuksien ja perusvapauksien sekä Yhdistyneiden kansakuntien peruskirjan periaatteiden kunnioittamisen kehittämiseen... lapsen valmistamiseen vastuulliseen elämään vapaassa yhteiskunnassa ymmärryksen, rauhan, suvaitsevaisuuden, sukupuolten välisen tasa-arvon ja kaikkien kansakuntien, etnisten, kansallisten ja uskonnollisten ryhmien sekä alkuperäiskansoihin kuuluvien henkilöiden välisen ystävyys hengessä.”*

Edellisessä kappaleessa mainitut Yhdistyneiden kansakuntien peruskirjan periaatteet, joita kasvatuksen tulisi pyrkiä kunnioittamaan ja kehittämään, päämäärineen ovat mm: *”kehittää kansakuntien välillä ystävällisiä suhteita... sekä ryhtyä muihin tarkoituksen mukaisiin toimenpiteisiin maailmanrauhan lujittamiseksi”.*

On huomionarvoista, että koska kansainvälisesti sitovissa dokumenteissa ihmisen moraallinen puoli, oikeus sen kasvamiseen ja velvollisuus sen kasvattamiseen tuodaan näin selkeästi esille, jostakin syystä se on päätetty jättää täysin pois siitä ohjeistosta, joka määrittää suomalaista varhaiskasvatuskenttää.

Olemmeko joutuneet tilanteeseen, jossa yksilön itsemääräämisoikeudelle on annettu niin suuri painoarvo, ettei hänelle voida arvopohjaisesti kertoa ja opettaa mikä on oikein ja mikä väärin vaikka tuon arvovalinnan takana olisi koko ihmiskunta?

Kaikki yllä mainitut kohdat huomioiden voidaan tiivistää, että päiväkotikäisen lapsen moraalinen kasvatus perustuu visioon, jossa:

1. Lasta tulee suojella toimilta ja vaikutuksilta, jotka voivat kehittää hänessä taipumusta rodulliseen, uskonnolliseen, sukupuoleen liittyvään tai mihin tahansa muuhun syrjintään.
2. Lasta kasvatetaan omaksumaan kaikkien kansakuntien, etnisten, kansallisten ja uskonnollisten ryhmien sekä alkuperäiskansoihin kuuluvien henkilöiden välisen ystävyyden henki sekä ymmärryksen, sukupuolten välisen tasa-arvon, suvaitsevaisuuden ja yleismaailmallisen veljeyden henki kanssaihmissiään kohtaan.
3. Lapsen kasvatus valmistaa häntä vastuulliseen elämään yhteiskunnassa, opettaa hänet vaalimaan ja kunnioittamaan elinympäristöä, kannustaa häntä siihen ymmärrykseen, että hänen tarmonsä ja kykynsä tulisi palvella hänen lähimmäisiään ja kanssaihmissiään, ja rohkaisee häntä toimillaan edistämään maailmanrauhan ihannetta.

Tästä yleisestä visiosta on puolestaan mahdollista johtaa sellaisia periaatteita, hyveitä, ja ominaisuuksia, jotka konkreettisesti ihmisessä ilmetessään vievät sitä eteenpäin ja joita päiväkotikäinen lapsi voi aiemmin mainitun varovaisuuden tavoin omaksua ja oppia. Tämä ei ole vain kasvattajan ja etenkin vanhempien velvollisuus, vaan ennen kaikkea lapsen oikeus; oikeus moraaliseen identiteettiin ja todelliseen ihmisyyteen, oikeus oppia ruokkimaan hyvää sutta.



## POHDITTAVAKSI

Se, miten yllä kuvailtua visiota voidaan käytännössä toteuttaa riippuu monista tekijöistä, kuten ryhmän koosta, ryhmässä olevien lasten iästä, yhteistyöstä vanhempien kanssa ja päiväkotikohtaisista erityishaasteista tai -vahvuuksista, ja on eittämättä parasta, että kukin päiväkoti tai ryhmä päätyy omaan kasvatustapaansa ja -menetelmiinsä paikan päällä tapahtuneen neuvottelun, pohdinnan ja kokeilun seurauksena.

Tätä pohdintaa ja päiväkodin oman moraalikasvatuksen tilanteen kartoittamista varten alla on esitetty useampia kysymyksiä. Kysymysten jälkeinen tyhjä tila on varattu niistä mahdollisesti kumpuaville ajatuksille, oivalluksille ja lisäkysymyksille jotka voi halutessaan kirjoittaa muistiin.

**Minkälaisia muutoksia moraalikasvatuksen toteuttaminen edellyttää omissa asenteissani, ajatuksissani ja ominaisuuksissani?**

**Kuinka moraalikasvatusta toteutetaan päiväkodissamme tai ryhmässämme tällä hetkellä? Kuinka lasta opetetaan hallitsemaan ja hillitsemään itseään, kuinka hyvä susi voittaa pahan?**

**Millä tavoin lapsille voi opettaa hyveitä tai ominaisuuksia? Kuinka iso rooli on sillä, että kykenen kasvattajana itse ilmentämään sitä mitä opetan?**

**Miten toimin yhteistyössä vanhempien kanssa ja mitä se edellyttää? Ovatko ryhmäni lasten vanhemmat tietoisia lasten moraaliseen kasvatukseen liittyvistä asioista ja niiden sisällöstä?**

**Onko hyvä vai huono asia, että lapsi kokee häpeän tunnetta tekojensa vuoksi?**

**Onko lapselle haittaa siitä, että hän joutuu tietyissä tilanteissa tekemään tahtonsa vastaisia asioita?**

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